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ABSTRACT

The Center for Productive School and Classroom Discipline at Cleveland State University was created to bring together the disparate and disorganized theories of classroom management and to provide assistence to teachers with persistent classroom control problems by developing teacher competencies. The Center has four objectives: (1) to provide information by offering graduate credit courses and presentations, publishing a newsletter, and maintaining a hotline for specific discipline problems; (2) to collect, classify, and evaluate all information on classroom discipline; (3) to design and develop materials; and (4) to provide a consulting service for local teachers. The instructional units that the Center offers concentrate on short-range procedures that are based on four theories: behavior modification, socio-emotional, group process, and management concepts. Between fifteen and twenty teachers and administrators work for the Center, making presentations, publishing the newsletter, acting as hotline consultants, and producing a multi-media management and discipline package. (FG)

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Help is on the Way: An Active Approach to Assisting Teachers with Management and Discipline Procedures

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The most pervasive and enduring educational problem, at least in the minds of the practicing public school teacher, is the perennial one of classroom discipline. No rationale or justification is needed to persuade teachers of the importance of this topic. No educational reform, be it humanistic, behavioristic, curricular or structural has had much effect in alleviating their concern over discipline. Furthermore, to the everlasting consternation of the classroom public school teacher, discipline has not traditionally been perceived as a primary concern by the education professor. Most practicing teachers received little help in their preservice training, and frequently, the issue was addressed by saying that if you have great lesson plans, you should not have problems. This approach in essence states that good instruction is the key to discipline. In the past, and indeed still, if the college instructor of pre-service teachers thought at all about discipline, it was to criticize the excessive harshness with which the classroom teacher dealt with the problem.

Until recent years, even the education professor who might have been inclined to confront the issue of classroom discipline had little useful to say about it. The lack of a theoretical model on which to suggest practice left them with little to draw on other than memories of their own stellar days in the classroom. If a university is helpful, it contributes best when applying a conceptual framework or a body of research to the solution of a practical problem. With common sense and experience as the only guide to

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practice, the in-service teacher provided the most reliable assistance to the pre-service teacher, and this was usually limited to the student teaching experience. In recent years, the development of a body of theory about discipline has enhanced the position of the college instructors. Consequently, education professors can now assume a legitimate role partnership with experienced practitioners assisting both pre- and in-service teachers.

It was both this frequently expressed need by teachers for assistance with persistent classroom control problems and the need to bring together the disparate and disorganized elements of knowledge about management and discipline that justified the creation of a Center for Productive School and Classroom Discipline at Cleveland State University. With a grant from the Martha Holden Jennings and George Gund Foundations, the Center began operation in January of 1980. The stated purpose of the Center was to develop teacher competencies in dealing with school and classroom discipline problems. Specific Center objectives were to:

1. Provide information, including graduate credit courses, presentations to teacher groups, publishing a newsletter, and the establishment of a "hotline" for specific discipline problems.

2. Collect, classify and study all information available on this topic. This objective included extensive review and evaluation of a wide range of information on management and discipline.

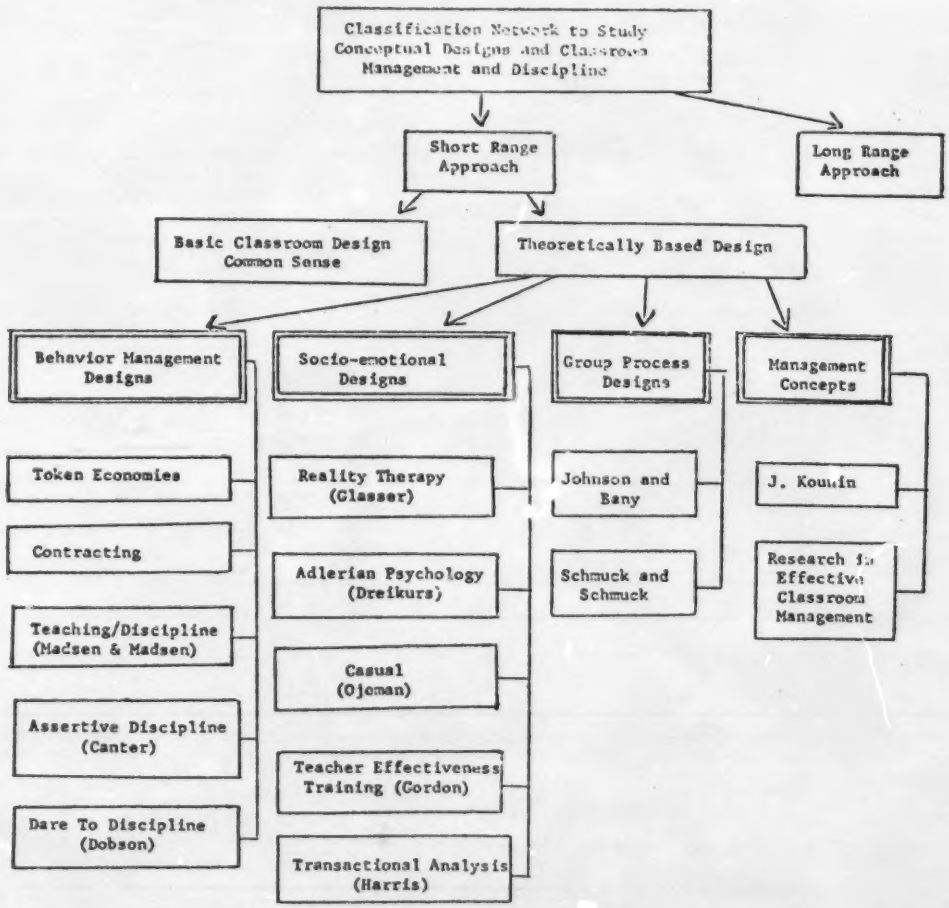
3. Design and develop material. This involved both the production of new teacher aids and the revision or adoption of existing information on the subject.

4. Operate a consulting service for teachers in the Greater Cleveland area. This would include the services of skilled practitioners working in a regular classroom setting as well as the identification of experts for highly specific areas of concern.

Toward meeting objective one, the Center has to date conducted ten 30-hour courses for teachers including five for Cleveland Board of Education teachers, two at a local teacher center, and two on-site in suburban schools.

The Center also sponsored two seminars for principals concerning the broader problems of total school discipline. Over 400 teachers and administrators have taken these courses and seminars.

The course format begins by asking teachers to conceptualize their ideally managed classroom and school followed by an analysis of what conditions presently exist in their room. The remaining time is spent developing competencies needed to enable them to move from where they are to where they would like to be and assessment of their effects. The training approach of the Center staff has been eclectic. That is, a full range of conceptual designs are taught. The diagram outlines the classification of conceptual designs used by the instructional staff.



Instruction centers on short range approaches or procedures under the control of the teacher which can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time as opposed to the long range approach. (A long range approach, for example, might involve a grade level reorganization of the whole school or several schools). It also centers on the theoretically based designs as opposed to those based upon common sense. The Center staff recognizes the valuable assistance of the common sense procedures. However, for every common practice suggestion, there is the example of the individual teacher who either followed it and failed or followed a quite opposite procedure with success. In addition these procedures lack a pedagogical order that allows them to be broken down in a sequential hierarchy for instructional purposes.

The theoretically based designs are in turn divided into four parts: behavior modification, socio-emotional, group process and managerial designs. The behavior modification designs have their roots in behavioral psychology. The designs utilize a systematic schedule of reinforcement. Some of them include a degree of emphasis on punishment. Under the heading, socio-emotional designs are those based upon field and gestalt psychology with a stress on human relations. While the designs under this heading all have unique characteristics, they share a number of common elements, the major one being that learning is maximized in a positive classroom climate. The group process designs have their origin in social psychology which conceives the classroom as a social system where the nature and behavior of the group is veiwed as having a significant effect on learning. The procedures under the group management design are characterized by their nonphilosophical emphasis on group control. Their origin is primarily from recent research on management techniques and systematic observation of effective teachers.

In addition to the graduate credit courses, Center personnel have put on over 50 presentations (one to three hours in length) at various Greater Cleveland Area schools. The presentation include an overview of the management and discipline issue, along with an explanation of the format used in the courses. These meetings also provide an opportunity to introduce the other service components of the Center.

The Center's Newsletter, "Help Is On The Way," has also been a means of disseminating information. This publication, which is teacher produced, goes to over 900 local schools and carries reviews of books and media as well as new material produced by the Center.

About 15 to 20 administrators and teachers work for the Center in various capacities, including making presentations, publishing the newsletter, acting as a hotline consultant, conducting sessions and materials production. This past year, the University hired a full time local teacher on leave for a year to teach in the Center-sponsored workshops and a teacher from the Cleveland Public Schools also works part time with the Center as a visiting instructor.

The Center for Productive School and Classroom Discipline's most ambitious project will be the operation of the consultation and hotline service. Teachers and administrators associated with the Center have been working throughout the year preparing for this. A telephone call from a teacher will bring the following kinds of assistance.

1. Teacher-made handout materials designed to review and suggest practical applications in implementing the various conceptual designs.
2. Opportunity to attend "rap" sessions to discuss discipline problems.
3. A taped description of the problem, to be followed with a return call after analysis with a suggested prescription.
4. When possible, selected classroom visits, for on-site assistance.

In meeting the objective to collect, classify, and study all approaches to the problem, the Center has purchased books, films, film strips, video tapes and other informational aids in the field of management and discipline. These materials are used regularly in all courses and seminars. In addition, the Center has distributed hundreds of bibliographies and regularly reviews various media in its quarterly newsletter.

The Center staff is now in the process of producing a management and discipline package, titled "Fair, Firm and Friendly," which includes a guide of procedures, A.V. materials, hotline support and special on-site training. The program can be used for a total school or by individual teachers with resource help through the Center. This type of capability will hopefully enable the Center for Productive School and Classroom Discipline to be a major in-service component in the Greater Cleveland area.

In the coming years the Center plans to provide more extensive training to a larger number of teachers and administrators, more in-depth training to some teachers, and more specific assistance to individuals with problems. Specifically, the Center will:

1. Expand the quantity, quality and variety of training. The quantity of training will increase with the addition of University resources and the increased ability of districts to fund in-service training. Quality will be enhanced from our improving ability to use resources, including consultants, school practitioners, published materials and research. Our development of specialized topic seminars and workshops on total school discipline will increase the variety of offerings.

2. Develop the ability of teachers to work with a particular management and discipline procedure. By offering advanced work in development of management and discipline skills that incudes skill building and on-site assistance and assessment, the Center will provide an opportunity for a deeper commitment by teachers for systematic improvement of the room and school environment.

3. Train and use the practitioners in direct, on-site assistance. The Center will train selected practitioners who show promise in order that they will be able to give expert assistance to other teachers. Such individuals will work in their particular school district and will work for the Center on such projects as the rap sessions or

the analysis of particular problems. Some use will be made of the Classroom Teacher Educators and former VIP's who represent a group of selected, competent teachers with special responsibility in the pre-service program.

4. Concentrate the effort of the Center on one school. The intent here is to mobilize the experience of the Center in an effort to impact heavily on one school. The staff will bring to bear on one cluster of teachers their expertise and material developed during the past year and a half. The effectiveness of the Center will be proven in part by three factors: first, steady demand for in-service training as we develop both a corps of teachers increasingly competent in the management and discipline skills and a reputation for providing useful service; second, a supply of useful instructional materials; and third, an increasing inclination on the part of schools and the University to support a portion of the Center Services.

The expertise of the first year has greatly enhanced the ability of the Center to deliver useful information. The improvement has come from the hard work of the staff in evaluating material for instruction. It has come from our consultants and from the hard work of outside agencies such as the Institute for Research on Teaching and the National School Resource Network. But primarily the success already achieved, as well as the hope for future development of the Center for Productive School and Classroom Discipline, lies in the realization that the University can and should address this most persistent and enduring school problem.